

THE USE OF CULTURAL, ETHNIC, OR RELIGIOUS THEMES
IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Holmdel Township Board of Education believes that it is the responsibility of educators to foster mutual understanding and respect for the rights of all individuals regarding their beliefs, values, and customs. In pursuing this goal the Board recognizes that Holmdel Township is a diverse community with a variety of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The Board is also cognizant of the special significance of seasonal observances and religious holidays.

The Board recognizes that a genuine and broad secular program of education is furthered to some extent by advancement of students' knowledge about society's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Inclusion of this area of knowledge helps to achieve the district's educational goals.

Through the district's instructional programs, the Board shall seek to broaden our students' understanding of, and respect for, the many beliefs and customs stemming from the community's diverse multicultural religious, as well as from its racial, ethnic and cultural heritage. While one cannot study the richness of civilization without studying about religion, it is essential that those studies be conducted with sensitivity to the many religious beliefs existing within the student population; they must also remain consistent with law as interpreted by state and federal courts in accordance with the Constitution of the United States. Programs which teach about religion and its role in the social and historical development of civilization and in the social and political context of world events do not violate the religious neutrality of the public schools. **Schools may teach about but not promote religion.** The inclusion of religious themes in the study of the arts, literature, and history shall be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas.

The district supports the inclusion of cultural, ethnic and religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities, so long as such inclusion reinforces the secular educational goal of providing a valuable learning experience. A wide variety of activities shall be included throughout the year.

Teaching staff members of the Holmdel Township Public Schools are responsible for developing and implementing the curriculum, creating the school atmosphere, and demonstrating interest, sensitivity and support, so that students may see that different customs and beliefs are essential elements of a pluralistic society. The resources from the community may be utilized, as outlined in the established curriculum, to enhance the students' understanding and knowledge of cultural, ethnic and religious themes.

**THE USE OF CULTURAL, ETHNIC,
OR RELIGIOUS THEMES IN THE
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM (Continued)**

File Code: 6141.2

The Board shall solicit input from school personnel and community residents in the development and/or refinement of this policy and supporting regulation.

Source: Regular Board Meeting

Date: September 28, 1994

Revised: October 18, 1995

Revised: May 28, 1997

Legal References:

<u>N.J.S.A.</u>	18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
<u>N.J.S.A.</u>	18A:36-16	Rules regarding religious holidays
<u>N.J.S.A.</u>	18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)

U.S.C.A. Const. Amends. 1, 14

Florey v Sioux Falls School District, 619 F.2d. 1311 (8th Cir. 1980)

Lynch v Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668 104 S.Ct. 1355, 79 L.E.D. 2d 604 (1984)

Edwards v. Aguillard, 482 U.S. 578 S.Ct. 2573, 96 L.E.D. 2d 510 (1987)

Lee v. Weisman, 505 U.S. 112 S.Ct. 2649, 120 L.E.D. 2d 467 (1992)

American Civil Liberties Union v. Blackhorse Pike Regional Board of Education, No. 93-2651 (District Court, March 29, 1994)

Possible

Cross References:

*5113	Absences and excuses
*5127	Commencement activities
*5131	Conduct/discipline
*6115	Ceremonies and observances
*6121	Affirmative action
*6144	Controversial issues
*6161.2	Complaints regarding instructional materials

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.

Page 2 of 2



NJSBA POLICY SERVICES

New Jersey School Boards Association, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605-0909
Copyright 1980 by NJSBA. All rights reserved.